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Contents

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|
| 04 | Feature
<i>Spreading an Evangelism NET:
How the NAD Embraced Technology
for Mission and Evangelism</i> | 11 | NAD News Briefs |
| 08 | NAD Update
<i>At Retreat, Children's Ministry
Leaders Called to a "Reckless"
Pursuit of God and Ministry</i> | 13 | Perspective
<i>A God of Big Things</i> |

My Journey

If God was not guiding me, I would not be here. From Nepal to now, God [has been] guiding me. God put me specifically in the path of two Adventist guys; they came to my home and they did ministry with me. . . . It changed my life. I'm really thankful for His guidance, and I pray that God will guide me in the coming days.

Visit nadadventist.org/ajbisusilwal for more of Silwal's story.

BISU SILWAL,
*Nepalese Refugee Ministry leader,
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania*

Bizu Silwal



Cover photo by Art Brondo

Dear Reader: The publication in your hands represents the collaborative efforts of the North American Division and *Adventist World* magazine (Justin Kim, editor), which follows *Adventist Journey* (after page 16). Please enjoy both magazines!

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ADVENTIST JOURNEY

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Adventist World and *Adventist Review* magazines are coming together! Starting with the July/August edition, look for the "new" *Review* right here, after the *Adventist Journey* magazine pages. And for the rest of 2025, *Adventist Journey* will be published every other month as we plan for an update coming in 2026.

SPREADING AN Evangelism NET

In the past, NAD Embraced
Technology for Mission
as Creative Initiatives
Utilized Computers
and Satellite Evangelism

BY MICHAEL W. CAMPBELL

As Adventists today embrace Pentecost 2025 it is important to remember some cutting-edge innovations for Adventist outreach and evangelism that took place during the 1990s. Some three decades later it may be difficult to fully appreciate just how new (and at times even startling) these efforts were.

Such discussions began in 1993 when the North American Division (NAD) leadership participated in a series of satellite broadcasts with the newly formed Adventist Communication Network. A test program on July 3, 1993, engaged churches across North America as evangelist Mark Finley conducted a live broadcast from Russia where he—at that moment—was participating in evangelistic meetings. After the fall of the Soviet Union, suddenly new opportunities were blossoming across the former Communist government as people hungered to simply have a copy of the Bible.



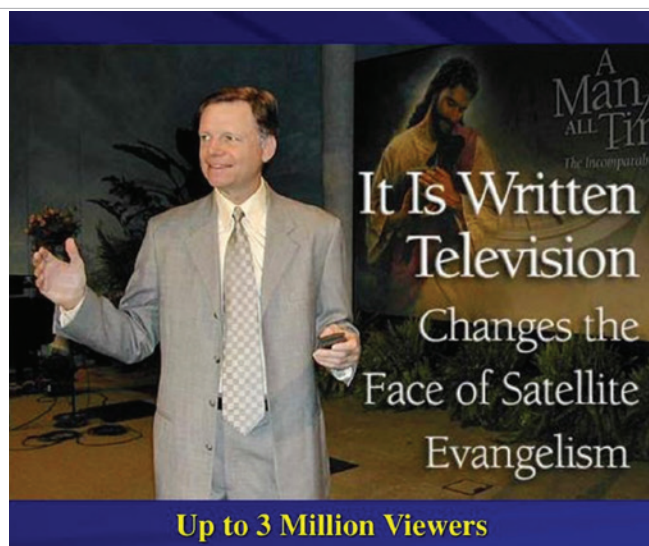
In 1998, Dwight Nelson shakes hands with 6-year-old Marissa Ayala—who was conceived in the desperate hope that her bone marrow might match that of her dying older sister. (It did.) Nelson used the story to illustrate God's sending a Baby to save the human race. *Dick Dower*

As a follow-up to the broadcast, this time held at the Capitol Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church in Washington, D.C., speakers included then church president Robert S. Folkenberg and Wintley Phipps, local church pastor, who together emphasized the importance of religious liberty. Adventists were catching on to the idea that it was possible to embrace satellite technology to disseminate information, especially as a catalyst for sharing Jesus with others.

At the 1993 NAD Year-End Meeting there was a three-day spiritual retreat “marked by prayer, praise, worship, and evangelistic planning.” Division president Alfred C. McClure (1931-2006) challenged church leaders about what they needed to do, so that they might experience church growth. He believed that some things needed to change in order for the church to become more effective in its outreach. In fact, evangelism was the critical ingredient necessary for church growth. Said McClure, “We must make our churches more friendly. We should develop an atmosphere in which people will feel free and happy to connect with His church.” This meant that they needed to “catch up with the times.”

Leaders identified seven key goals for the denomination in North America: “A vibrant Christian experience for all church members; local churches that are mission-driven and active in meeting community needs; a doubling of the division’s growth rate; a management structure at the conference, union, and division levels that is geared to outreach and mission instead of institutional maintenance; and colleges that continually assess and address the spiritual growth needs of students.”

As a result of this innovative initiative, by early 1994 plans began to formulate for a NET ’95 division-wide evangelistic campaign, with Finley as the main speaker and Charles D. Brooks (1930-2016) answering questions. The program would “be uplinked by satellite to all churches.” McClure noted that 200 to 300 churches



NET'95
NET '96
ACTS 2000

Mark Finley is shown speaking during a satellite evangelism program in the late 1990s. Slide from an *It Is Written* presentation, circa 2009.

had already signed up to secure equipment even though an official announcement had not gone out. On March 28, 1994, the first of a series of training initiatives was broadcast by satellite. The first one was held by Finley and McClure sharing “the goals and objectives” of the NET series. By education, now delivered by satellite, they believed they could more easily train and prepare local download sites for this outreach initiative.

Propelled Forward by Computers, the Internet, and Ads

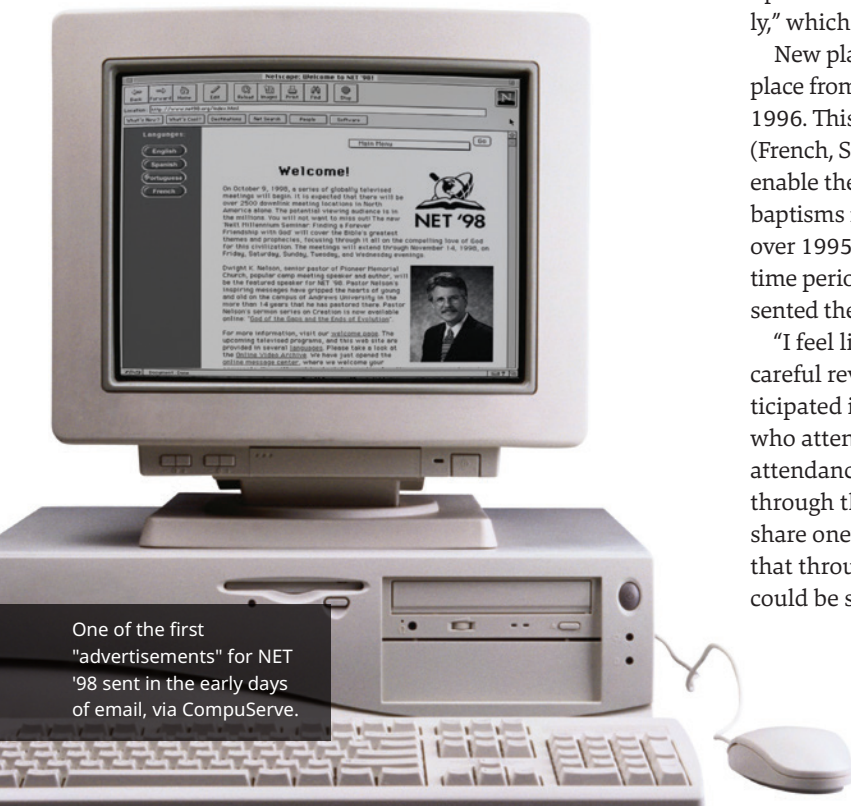
As they prepared for the series, as Adventist embraced technology for outreach, another creative initiative centered on “a computer program called ‘Internet.’” This appeared to be a promising area for ministry, and they proposed utilizing a commercial product such as CompuServe to create an Adventist online group with 18 “bulletin boards” to be used by anyone around the world who was online. CompuServe at the time could be accessed through local telephone numbers by 95 percent of the population in North America. It was urged that each office or department at the NAD plan to disseminate information over CompuServe, saving money and offering great access to information.

As plans matured for the NET ’95 evangelism series, McClure was on the forefront of organizing a number of training events from the second half of 1994 through early 1995. Notable events included a series of lay training events with Finley, a special satellite 1844 anniversary event (the 150th anniversary of the Great Disappointment), and a satellite prayer conference. The Amazing Discoveries Series (later dubbed “Discoveries in Prophecies”) evangelistic series would be available from February 17 through March 25, 1995. Of special note was the ability of the church to leverage national ad campaigns at little to no



Evangelism was the critical ingredient necessary for church growth. . . . Church leaders learned that it was possible to share one's faith with others through technology.

cost to the local church. In addition to church organizations and publications leveraging their influence, the denomination sponsored full-page ads in the January and February editions of the *Saturday Evening Post*. Some 7 million handbills were direct-mailed to homes with radio and TV spots, billboards, and posters. The meetings would be held across multiple time zones, using broadcast delays so that the program would be available at 7:15 p.m. in each time zone across the United States.



One of the first "advertisements" for NET '98 sent in the early days of email, via CompuServe.



Pastor Wintley Phipps provided a music ministry for Net '95. *Adventist Review*

High Technology, "High Touch" Ministry

Reports described 66,000 people across 676 locations in North America on the opening night of NET '95. It was later reported that 5,000 baptisms resulted. "High technology makes it possible to have more 'high touch' ministry," wrote McClure. "With a satellite evangelist, thousands of pastors can focus on personal work with families and individuals." The meetings were later followed up with a special broadcast program titled "Welcome to the Family," which aired on April 15.

New plans were put into place for NET '96, which would take place from Orlando, Florida, from October 5 through November 9, 1996. This time the meetings would be dubbed in three languages (French, Spanish, and Portuguese), and close-captioning would enable the hearing-impaired to participate. By the end of the year, baptisms in the NAD had increased to 39,004, an 8 percent increase over 1995, with an initial estimate of 4,000 baptisms over the same time period as a result of the NET '96 initiative. This growth represented the highest number of baptisms in the history of the NAD.

"I feel like singing the doxology," wrote McClure. Later, with careful review, it was determined that 1,910 churches had participated in the NET '96 series. This resulted in 171,182 people who attended the opening night, with 51,306 nonmembers in attendance, and 9,772 who were baptized. Church leaders learned through this initial foray into technology that it was possible to share one's faith with others through technology. They discovered that through computers and satellites the Adventist message could be shared in new and creative ways.

Michael W. Campbell is director of Archives, Statistics, and Research for the North American Division.

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CHILDREN'S MINISTRY LEADERS CALLED TO A "RECKLESS" PURSUIT OF GOD AND MINISTRY

At annual division retreat, 120 meet for spiritual renewal, fellowship, and training.

BY CHRISTELLE AGBOKA

From January 14 to 18, 2025, roughly 120 participants, including Children's Ministries directors and their teams, and children's pastors, met at Falls Church, Virginia, for the annual North American Division Children's Ministries retreat. Themed "Reckless," the event encouraged attendees to pursue God and ministry goals with bold faith. For busy leaders, "Reckless" offered spiritual renewal, equipping, and fellowship through worship, practical training, and social activities.

Sherri Uhrig, NAD Children's Ministries director, introduced the theme with a story of teaching her then-14-year-old son to drive. Approaching a steep hill, he accelerated instead of shifting gears—gravel flying everywhere. As they came to a screeching halt on the other side, he told a stunned Uhrig, "Mom, some-

times you have to be reckless to get where you want to be."

The notion of reckless faith pervaded the retreat, with Uhrig and Gerry Lopez, NAD Children's Ministries associate director, drawing inspiration from the event's theme song, "Reckless Love," and accompanying devotional book.

Each day highlighted a subtheme: reckless love, reckless joy, reckless peace, and the reckless pursuit of God's love, all rooted in Christ's immeasurable sacrifice. The event was grounded in Romans 5:8: "But Christ died for us while we were still sinners. In this way God shows his great love for us" (ICB).*

Reckless Leadership

During preconference sessions on January 14, attendees, using the DISC assessment—which categorizes

personality traits in four key areas: dominance, influence, steadiness, and compliance—explored how personality impacts leadership and team dynamics. They also reviewed the SCARF model, which identifies five behavioral motivators: status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness, and fairness. Finally, attendees gained tools for team-building and conflict management. Organizers plan to make these popular preevent sessions, held for the first time in 2025, an annual professional development add-on.

The next day Kevin Wilson, pastor at Sunnyside Seventh-day Adventist Church in Oregon and social media's "Chaplain of Chai," kick-started the retreat with a presentation that was equal parts cultural chai-making demonstration and motivational speech, ending with a sweet treat—premade chai from Wilson. As he



← Sherri Uhrig, NAD Children's Ministries director, addresses leaders at the North American Division 2025 Reckless Children's Ministries retreat. *Art Brondo*

blended spices, tea, and oat milk, Wilson shared his unlikely path to becoming “someone who makes chai and talks about Jesus.”

Wilson highlighted chai's social justice implications, noting that just as the various teas come from the same plant, *Camellia sinensis*, we are interconnected. He also shared that, like the intricate chai-making process, each step in our journey is purposeful. For instance, having moved from Sri Lanka to various countries at a young age, he easily connects with his diverse online community, including many “who'll never walk into a local church.” He explained that what we may see as a liability in our story is often an asset, concluding, “For me, home is everywhere, and home is nowhere. So I can connect with anyone, anywhere.”

On Thursday Seth Yelorda, pastor and leadership coach, gave leaders a road map for pursuing a reckless, God-inspired vision, defined as “a picture of the future that gives passion to the present.” He began, “Your ability to lead others with a bold, transformative vision is directly connected to your ability to manage your internal clarity and align it with your identity.”

One of his first exercises was crafting a personal mission statement. Yelorda then led attendees to reflect on what seemed possible, improbable, and impossible in ministry, emphasizing, “Nothing is impossible with Christ.” He introduced KASH—knowledge, attitude, skills, and habits—as four tools for overcoming barriers. He espoused the sage perspective that “every outcome or circumstance can be turned into a gift or opportunity.” Additionally, he promoted networking with and learning from other denominations, schools, or child-focused organizations.

Other activities included identifying stakeholders' needs and creating project plans for 90 days, one year, three years, and five to 10 years. “This [road map] becomes your guiding light; without it, there is chaos,” he cautioned. Yelorda affirmed and challenged the leaders present: “We need individuals with conviction—a conviction that says we will not lose one child in our union; a conviction that says we're going to create a pipeline from preschool to the gates of heaven. And what we do here is about learning, growing, and equipping ourselves to return to our conference or union with passion and conviction to keep fighting.”

The training culminated in a Vacation Bible School demonstration Friday morning at the Vienna Seventh-day Adventist Church in Virginia. The group learned about the Mountain of Miracles: God's Love Is Rock Solid program, including songs, skits, and an overview. In teams they engaged in crafts, games, snacks, Bible stories, and team cheers. The meeting concluded with a question-and-answer session with Brad Forbes, president of AdventSource, which sells the VBS kit.

Building Community

A key element of community building at the retreat was corporate worship. On day one the retreat introduced the Washington



↑ Leaders from across the division enjoy day one of the NAD's 2025 Reckless Children's Ministries retreat. *Pieter Damsteegt*

Friday night speaker Kevin Wilson, Oregon Conference pastor and social media's “Chaplain of Chai,” compares our life's journey to the intricate process of making chai. *Pieter Damsteegt*

One of the highlights of the NAD's 2025 Reckless Children's Ministries retreat was Vacation Bible School Live, where leaders experienced VBS for themselves. Here some leaders perform a team cheer to an engaged audience of peers. *Christelle Agboka*



← On day two of the 2025 Reckless Children's Ministries retreat, Seth Yelorda, pastor and leadership coach, gives leaders a road map for pursuing a reckless, God-inspired vision. *Christelle Agboka*

Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church praise team, theme song, key text, and prayer wall, with the worship experience culminating in special services on Friday evening and Sabbath.

Friday evening vespers began with a formal candlelit dinner, meditative music, and an invitation to place one's burdens on colored tape on a paper cross. Vandeon Griffin, NAD Youth and Young Adult Ministries associate director, then delivered a message titled "Not Enough Time," based on the Luke 8 story of Jairus, the synagogue ruler begging Jesus to heal his 12-year-old daughter. Griffin reimagined Jairus as a powerful children's ministries leader, saying, "God sometimes places us, as Children's Ministries leaders, directors, and pastors, in situations where no one but He can help. That's where we find Jairus."

En route to Jairus' house, Jesus and Jairus faced an interruption—the woman with the issue of blood—and then learned that Jairus' daughter had died. Similarly, we often face interruptions in ministry, challenges that compel us to rely on Him. Upon hearing the news, Jesus reassured Jairus that his daughter would be made well, and once they reached the house, He immediately resurrected the young girl.

"He is saying that what seemingly is dead I can make alive with the time you have left, not only in this child's life but also in your life as a director. I challenge us to give Jesus an opportunity to speak to the dead thing in our lives," said Griffin. He then prayed for God to help the leaders "do amazing exploits," beginning with the children in their spheres of influence.

Immediately after Griffin's message, Lopez, Griffin, and Uhrig led a Communion service, including foot washing, followed by an emotional rendition of the song "Reckless Love." Alexandria Harter, associate pastor for children and family ministries at the Spring Meadows Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sanford, Florida, offered a closing prayer, celebrating hope and renewal in Jesus.

As the Sabbath morning speaker, Harter focused on our reckless pursuit of God, turning to John 4, where

Jesus met a Samaritan woman at a well. She was astonished when He, a Jewish man, asked her, a Samaritan woman, for a drink, and even more amazed when He said that if she knew who He was, she would have asked Him for living water. "She was pursuing God but didn't know it," said Harter.

After Jesus revealed that He was the Messiah, the woman left her waterpot and ran into the nearby city to tell others about Him. "She was so full of living water, she left the waterpot recklessly," said Harter.

Later, when the disciples urged Jesus to eat, He replied, "I have food you know nothing about." Harter explained, "Pursue Him with abandon, because you are the food that fills His heart." She added, "Your being full will fill others. And the cycle [will continue]." Reflecting on God's cleansing love, she concluded, "How far will you go to pursue the One who can give you living, bubbling, flowing fountains of water?"

The evening program featured a devotional by Marilyn Scott, associate pastor for children's and family ministries for the Bell Branch and Pasadena church districts. Scott shared, "No matter how far off-track we feel, we are never too far gone for God to love us."

She continued, "For those struggling with unworthiness, burnout, and loneliness, hear me—God sees you and loves you just as you are. When He expresses His love, He takes all the risks. This is reckless." She urged attendees, "Once you've experienced that love, let it flow into the world, [to the] families we minister to. Help them see His love."

Back to Center

As the retreat wound down, Uhrig and Lopez took a moment to thank their planning committee, production team, volunteers, and hotel staff. Then they invited attendees to the "parting party," where leaders bonded over s'mores, board games, a 360 camera selfie experience, and Christian music in a relaxed setting.

For Uhrig and Lopez, empowering NAD Children's Ministries directors is vital to the church's mission. Lopez asserted, "Children aren't part of the future. They are part of the now, and we need to really [emphasize] this ministry so our church can have a future."

The next retreat will be held in Louisville, Kentucky, from January 20 to 24, 2026, with a preconference on January 20. Visit www.childmin.org for updates. To read the full story, visit <https://ow.ly/eGN150VBIPC>.

* Scriptures credited to ICB are quoted from the *International Children's Bible*, copyright © 1986, 1988, 2008, 2015 by Tommy Nelson. Used by permission.

NAD NEWS BRIEFS

Center for Youth Evangelism to Become North American Division Entity

On March 26, 2025, the North American Division (NAD) voted to receive the Center for Youth Evangelism, LLC (CYE), as an official entity of the division as of May 1, 2025. This vote comes after the March 24, 2025, vote by the Andrews University board to transfer to the division the nonprofit entity that has been part of the university since 1979 under the name of Youth Resource Center (it was renamed CYE in 1996). As part of the transfer, the corporate membership of Andrews University board of trustees will move to the North American Division, meaning that the NAD will need to establish a new board for CYE.

On March 5 Pastor Ron Whitehead, who currently serves as the executive director, was voted by the Lake Union Conference committee to the full-time position of Youth,

Young Adult, and Children's Ministries director with the Lake Union, after serving at the union as a volunteer youth director for 29 years while holding the Andrews/CYE position. Ron and his wife, Betty, decided to transition away from CYE, and Ron has accepted a call to be the full-time director for the Lake Union. Their transition is effective May 1, 2025.

CYE has run several significant events through the years, including Cruise With a Mission, We Care (mission trips), the 180° Symposium, and the International Pathfinder Camporee. Under the leadership of Whitehead, CYE coordinated six international camporees. Whitehead coordinated his first major camporee in Colorado in 1994, when he worked for the Rocky Mountain Conference.

"The Seventh-day Adventist Church in general, and the North

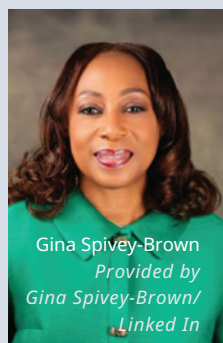


Aerial photo of the 2024 International Pathfinder Camporee held in Gillette, Wyoming. The camporee is one of the events CYE runs. *Pieter Damsteegt*

American Division in particular, owe Ron and Betty a debt of gratitude for the tremendous leadership they have rendered through the years. Ron has shown us how to run big events successfully with maximum impact that have been transformative to our youth. He has graciously consented to assist as a consultant during the transition for the upcoming months," shared G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president.

—North American Division
Office of Communication

Oakwood University Announces the Selection of Its Twelfth President



Gina Spivey-Brown
Provided by
Gina Spivey-Brown/
Linked In

On March 28, 2025, the Oakwood University board of trustees announced the appointment of Gina Spivey-Brown, Ph.D., R.N., M.S.A., FAAN, FNAP, FADLN, as the twelfth president of Oakwood University. Spivey-Brown will officially assume leadership on July 1, 2025, succeeding Leslie N. Pollard, who has led the institution for the past 15 years.

Spivey-Brown, who becomes the first female president in the 129-year history of the university, brings a wealth of experience in higher education, leadership, and a deep commitment to Oakwood's mission of preparing students for service through excellence in faith, scholarship, and leadership. With an impressive background in administration, academia, and ministry, Spivey-Brown is uniquely positioned to lead Oakwood University into its next chapter of growth and innovation.

"We are excited to welcome Dr. Gina Spivey-Brown to the Oakwood family," said G. Alexander Bryant, chair of the Oakwood University board of trustees. "She is a dynamic, spirit-filled, higher education administrative leader with an impressive record of enrollment growth and academic excellence. During this critical time in the history of this university, the board has prayed and fasted for God's direction in this selection process."

Spivey-Brown most recently served at Howard University for the past 10 years as the dean of the College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences. With more than two decades of experience in higher education administration, she has played a pivotal role in academic program development, accreditation, and strategic leadership.

"I am deeply humbled that God chose me to be the twelfth president of Oakwood University for such a time as this," said Spivey-Brown. "I look forward to collaborating with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and stakeholders to build on Oakwood's rich history and advance its mission and vision."

—Oakwood University Office of Marketing Communications and Media Production



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BY MELISSA REID

A God of Big Things

I have the privilege of leading my church's prison ministries team as part of a larger fellowship of area Seventh-day Adventist volunteers who facilitate weekly Sabbath services and midweek Bible study at the nearby correctional facility. A few months back the volunteers were invited to attend a special meeting with the inside "elders team," during which they shared exciting news: the prison's Adventist congregation had outgrown its classroom meeting space and would be moving to the gymnasium to accommodate the increased attendance. There were huge smiles and enthusiastic praises for God's continued blessings on this faithful flock of believers.

The head elder then explained that while the new meeting space would alleviate the challenge of cramped quarters, it would exacerbate the inadequacy of the congregation's outdated musical instruments and sound system. Praise through song is a fundamental component of the congregation's Sabbath service, as it provides the men with an opportunity to rejoice at the incredible power of the Holy Spirit to transform lives. The leadership had been able to secure a quote of \$2,700 to replace the outdated equipment. Could we, their outside family, cover the cost of some used but well-maintained instruments?

Prison ministries is traditionally not a substantial part of a local church budget, and as we volunteers began to contemplate the request, it quickly became apparent that this would be a significant request to take back to our local congregations. But we felt certain that God would bless the "problem" of a larger meeting space. After a lengthy season of prayer and an agreement to approach our individual churches with the funding request, we exited the prison walls and dispersed into the night.

After several days of prayers for guidance, I felt confident in my strategy. Having not yet seen the 2025 church budget but with the experience of leading this ministry for several years, I estimated the annual prison ministries allocation would be around \$300. My "ask" would be for an additional \$300, for a total contribution of \$600 for the project. We are not a wealthy congregation by any

means, but why not petition for double our yearly allowance? After all, I reasoned, we serve a God who "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20, NKJV).*

I called my pastor and articulated my rehearsed appeal. "We have a fiscally conservative finance committee this term. I don't know the prison ministries budget offhand, but it's likely less than it was in prior years," he responded. My heart sank, and yes, my faith weakened. I was already imagining having to tell the prison elders the disappointing news that we couldn't assist in the way I'd hoped and believed. "That said," Pastor Matt continued, "I think prison ministries has a balance of \$2,000. Let me double-check and get back to you." My mouth dropped in astonishment.

We disconnected, and I prayerfully waited for confirmation. A few minutes later I received a text: "I was wrong; there's \$3,000 in the prison ministries account."

I was equal parts stunned, jubilant, and chastened. My inadequate faith had inspired me only to ask for double the amount of our standard budget. Meanwhile, God had already delivered tenfold!

I don't know when or why those funds were donated. I don't know if the money came from an individual donor or multiple members. But I do know that, as is promised in Isaiah 65:24, God had answered even before I called. While I was still formulating my "ask" He'd already answered in abundance.

Last Sabbath I was back worshipping with our incarcerated brothers. What a privilege it was to share the testimony of serving a God of big miracles. Let's never allow small faith to limit His benevolence.

Melissa Reid is an associate director for the North American Division Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department.

I was equal parts stunned, jubilant, and chastened. God had already delivered tenfold!

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Sophia

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To learn more about Sophia's journey, scan the QR code or visit willplan.org/Sophia



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MATTHEW 28:19, 20

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